Pact’s Approach to Capacity Development

Pact’s vision describes “a world where those who are poor and marginalized discover and build their own solutions and take ownership over their future.” We seek to achieve this by ensuring that:

1. Vulnerable people access the health products, services and information they need to enjoy a healthy life.
2. People with limited livelihood choices gain the resources needed to be income secure.
3. Resource dependent communities gain lasting benefit from the sustainable use of the natural resources around them.

Capacity development is a core approach that we apply to advance our organizational vision and enhance impact, in integration with good governance and access to markets. We define capacity development as “a continuous process that fosters the abilities and agency of individuals, institutions, and communities to overcome challenges and contribute towards local solutions in health, livelihoods and natural resources management. Though often developed in response to an immediate and specific issue, capacities are adaptable to future opportunities and challenges.”

Though Pact is not alone among international NGOs in having a capacity development competency, we are distinctive in that we apply a capacity development lens to all that we do. As an organization, we have been at the forefront of capacity development for several decades, and we continue to strive for the most effective way to help people move towards meaningful and productive lives now and in the future. Our unique approach to capacity development is:

- **Local**: We facilitate solutions that are created by the people we serve;
- **Shared**: We broker partnerships that deepen impact; and
- **Whole**: We seek lasting impact through the changing of systems and structures

**Pact’s Capacity Development Framework**

Pact has pioneered a comprehensive framework that describes the multi-faceted nature of capacity development. Our framework disaggregates capacity development into three continua, which together describe the range of capacity development opportunities. We believe that the right combination of interventions tailored to any given context will lead to local actors (1) overcoming challenges, and (2) contributing towards local solutions.

This document is part of a series of short papers that explain what Pact does and why.
Whose Capacity Are We Developing?

The first continuum of Pact’s capacity development framework describes the range of actors we engage with for capacity development support, or “whose capacity is being developed?”

- **Individuals** such as civil society leaders, youth activists, change agents or development professionals.
- **Organizations** include civil society organizations, for-profit businesses and government departments.
- **Networks** include civil society networks, coordinating bodies at the local or national level, business coalitions and communities of practice.
- **Systems** are groups such as communities and national or regional groups of actors responding to a common issue.

In order to develop the most powerful local solutions, it is necessary to identify targets for capacity development that have the greatest potential to generate positive impact.

What Capacity Are We Developing?

The second facet of Pact’s capacity development framework describes the range of capacities that we are seeking to develop through our support, or “what capacities are being developed?”

- **Technical Capacities** are the capacities relevant to the specific impact area or development challenge that the actor is seeking to address. Technical capacities may be those related to delivering services to most vulnerable children, managing an ecosystem, developing small and medium sized enterprises, etc.
- **Organizational Capacities** are the skills and abilities necessary to implement individual tasks in a consistent and reliable way. Such capacities include systems and structures for organizational governance, financial management, human capital development, resource mobilization, etc.
- **Adaptive Capacities** focus on the ability to react to changes in operating environment whether due to political, environmental or socio-cultural reasons. Critical skills for adaptation include the ability to plan, analyze and learn.
- **Influencing Capacities** are those skills that enable actors to alter the environment in which it operates. Examples include improved advocacy, lobbying, negotiation and research skills.

The most powerful capacity development interventions, those most likely to support real change, work on strengthening partner capacities across the whole continuum.
How Are We Developing Capacity?

The third facet of Pact’s capacity development framework describes the range of methodologies for capacity development interventions, or “how is capacity being developed?” Capacity development interventions vary from being highly expert-driven to highly participant-driven.

- **Consultancy services** and trainings deliver expert knowledge and best practices to our partners.
- **Mentoring** and coaching and knowledge management techniques support the embedding of new capacities within partners.
- **Peer exchange** activities allow partners to learn from successes and challenges of others.

Pact’s recommends an approach that draws upon multiple methodologies and learning styles, customizing these to the partner organization and the particular challenge at hand.

Principles of Good Capacity Development?

Underpinning all of Pact’s capacity development work are four key principles. Pact’s *Principles of Good Capacity Development* were initially developed as part of Pact Ethiopia’s comprehensive capacity development evaluation in 2008. They were revised in 2011 by members of Pact’s Capacity Development Community of Practice. The principles draw heavily on a diverse literature base and have since been applied to our projects worldwide.

1. **Quality**: Pact employs and nurtures highly qualified personnel to develop practical skills and competencies of partners, so that they can improve performance, develop local solutions, enhance impact and achieve development goals. Approaches are researched, tested, documented and packaged, and this is coupled with training of staff for effective scale-up.

2. **Partnership**: Pact creates trust-based relationships with partners where capacity development is facilitated for mutually agreed results. Capacity development needs are determined jointly with partners/clients who actively engage in and own the process. Pact intentionally links partners for networking, mentoring, information sharing and joint action.

3. **Customization**: Capacity development responses are tailored to the specific values, challenges and opportunities of organizations within the context that they work. Interventions are designed based on the results of participatory assessments and on-going monitoring of progress.

4. **Learning**: Capacity development includes a deliberate process of reflecting on the interventions and results to better respond to organizational challenges and adapt to change. Continuous learning is baked into programming as both a process and result of capacity development.

Pact’s recommends an approach that draws upon multiple methodologies and learning styles, customizing these to the partner organization and the particular challenge at hand.
**Phases of a Pact Capacity Development Intervention**

There are five core phases of any Pact capacity development intervention.

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**Scan** – The first phase of a Pact capacity development intervention is a scan of the ecosystem of actors – the individuals, organizations, networks and systems - that have the potential to either positively or negatively influence the development challenge that we are seeking to address.

In order to achieve success, it is necessary to identify those actors that are in the best position to influence the development challenge at hand. These actors will be the focus of Pact’s capacity development support over the life of an initiative. Traditionally, capacity development efforts have focused at the individual and organizational levels. Increasingly, however, Pact’s capacity development practitioners are recognizing the importance of directly supporting networks and systems in order to bring multiple competencies to bear against complex challenges.

Pact has a range of tools that support the scan phase of a capacity development intervention. These include: Organizational Network Analysis (ONA); Sectoral Analyses; Stakeholder Mapping; Good Governance Barometer (GGB); and Annual Program Statements (APS)

**Analyze** – The specific support provided to any given actor is determined through a comprehensive, holistic capacity analysis. Our capacity analysis tools are tailored to the specific context and development challenge, but take into account a full continuum of technical, organizational, adaptive and influencing capacities that we know to be critical for success.

Pact’s capacity analysis tools are built around the principles of quality, partnership, customization and learning. As such our capacity development initiatives employ guided self-assessments whereby our partners assess themselves with the assistance of trained Pact facilitators and clearly articulated capacity benchmarks.

Pact has a range of tools that support the analyze phase of a capacity development intervention: Organizational Capacity Assessments (OCA); Programmatic Capacity Assessment (PCAT); Technical Organizational Capacity Assessments (TOCA); Rapid Organizational Scans (ROS); Network Capacity Assessment (NECA); and Organizational Network Analysis (ONA). Managers are encouraged to select the analysis tool(s) that are most relevant for the needs of their partners.

**Plan** – The results of capacity analyses are shared with our partners and used to inform the development of a plan for capacity development. A partner’s capacity development plan identifies the needs that an organization is seeking to address over 1-3 years. It identifies the steps that will be taken to develop capacity over time, and the anticipated results from the completion of those
steps. Furthermore it identifies the different roles to be played and responsibilities held by the partner, Pact and other actors in supporting this capacity development. As capacity development support is a partnership, there should always be a balance between the responsibilities of Pact and the responsibilities of the partner.

The specific contents of a partner’s capacity development plan are identified and negotiated between Pact and the partner organization. The completed plan belongs to the partner who is the owner of the plan and may use the plan in support of negotiations with other donors or partners. Performance based incentives may be linked to the completion of activities in a capacity development plan. Where a partner shows greater commitment towards completing their own commitments, in turn they unlock additional external support to their efforts.

Pact’s primary tool for the plan phase of a capacity assessment is the Capacity Development Plan (CD Plan), Institutional Strengthening Plan (ISP) or Network Strengthening Plan (NS Plan). These tools share common elements, but are tailored to the country context and development challenge.

Act — Capacity development interventions vary from being highly expert-driven consultancy services or trainings, to highly participant-driven peer-to-peer exchange. Pact’s distinctive approach emphasizes the use of a range of techniques to best support the development of skills, abilities, processes and practices in the systems, communities and organizations with which we work.

Our experience in multiple contexts, and with diverse actors has taught us that one-off trainings are never enough to fully develop a new capacity, and that we can significantly increase uptake of new skills by combining training with follow-up assistance, access to relevant intellectual capital and opportunities for peer learning. All Pact capacity development initiatives are designed with this best practice in mind.

Pact has a range of tools and approaches that support the act phase of a capacity development intervention: Capacity Development Toolkit; Network Strengthening Toolkit; Capacity Development Marketplace; and Grants Management Toolkit.

Learn — Pact’s comprehensive approach to monitoring and evaluation capacity development supports our local partners to analyze, learn from, and improve upon their activities to deliver better impact. For this reason, Pact has developed a series of curricula designed to help local organizations build their own M&E systems. All courses focus on learning by doing, in order that so participants are empowered to apply principles and practices to the creation of M&E systems for their own organization. Curricula include: Building Basic M&E Systems; Field Guide to Data Quality; Evaluation for Program Managers; and M&E for ME.

Measuring Capacity Development?

Pact’s theory of change for capacity development can be described as follows: (a) Stronger local organizations and networks (b) do better work and, (c) as a result, have greater impact (on health, the environment and livelihoods) in their target communities. In order to know whether our capacity development activities are succeeding, we need to measure three things:
1. **Change in the internal policies, procedures and practices of a partner:** These internal changes map to the “outputs” in our conceptual framework. They include improved financial systems, governance policies, HR procedures, leadership, communication, project management, and technical standards. Pact has a number of tools that we use to measure this change, including our Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA), Network Capacity Assessment (NECA), Technical Organizational Capacity Assessment (TOCA) and Organizational Development Roadmap.

2. **Change in partner performance:** These external changes map to the outcomes of capacity development in our conceptual framework. Pact breaks down performance into four key areas developed out of IDRC/Universalia’s capacity development framework:

   - **Effectiveness** - Partners are better able to achieve the outcomes they set for themselves and consistently achieve higher standards of service.
   - **Efficiency** - Partners are able to reach more people and complete activities on-time and on-budget.
   - **Relevance** - Services meet the continuum of care needs of beneficiaries and communities and are not duplicative of others.
   - **Sustainability** - Partners are financially sound. Services and activities designed/implemented in such a way that they can continue while needed.

   Improved performance is evidenced through progress across each of these areas, which is measured using the Organizational Performance Index.

3. **Change in the health, livelihoods and/or national resource management of communities served by partners.** Community level changes in health, natural resources management and livelihoods are the impact of our capacity development initiatives, the change that Pact and our partners seek to bring achieve. Progress towards these changes is predominantly measured through evaluations of our projects and initiatives.

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**In Myanmar,** Pact works to build the capacity of individual change agents or ‘community health champions’. A recent external evaluation against a comparison group found that “tuberculosis case detection rates are two times higher in Pact-supported villages than neighboring villages.”
Resources for Capacity Development
The following links contain a wealth of resources for capacity development practitioners:

- Pact’s Capacity Development Community of Practice Intranet Site (https://intranet.pact-world.org/COP/CD/Pages/default.aspx): Includes modules of Pact’s Capacity Development Toolkit, materials collected from Pact country offices and organized by topic area and issues of the Capacity Courier newsletter.

- “Capacity Development in Practice” Book (available free on line at: http://www.snvworld.org/en/Pages/CapacityDevelopment.aspx): Compendium drawn together from the work of several capacity development thought leaders was published in 2010 and describes the state of the art of the field.

- AIDSTAR II (http://www.aidstar-two.org/): Learning portal containing an array of resources from multiple organizations around capacity development for HIV/AIDS.


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